

Ford Rouge workers' vote for Insurgent Slate reveals developing rank-and-file rebellion against UAW bureaucracy

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The May 14–15 election at Ford’s Dearborn Truck Plant (DTP) chose delegates to the United Auto Workers Constitutional Convention, scheduled for June 15–18 in Detroit. Approximately 2,000 ballots were cast for 15 candidates in a workforce of roughly 4,300 — a turnout of about 46 percent.

Martaz Crutchfield, a fifth-generation Ford Rouge worker, received 122 votes — roughly 6 percent of the ballots cast. Crutchfield ran as part of Will Lehman’s Insurgent Slate, calling for the transfer of power to the rank-and-file and the abolition of the UAW bureaucracy. He announced his campaign at the 2026 May Day Online Rally, organized by the WSWs.

The election was won by seven insiders who are part of the UAW Local 600 apparatus operating under DTP unit President Nick Kottalis, the official who has sanctioned the forced overtime and the layoffs that idled hundreds at DTP and the Rouge Electric Vehicle Center (REV-C).

The seven elected delegates are: Kane Maks, Local 600 vice president and DTP bargaining representative (1,378 votes); Mia Mims, Local 600 District Rep (1,349); Monte Wall, DTP Bargaining (1,334); Al Alexander, Overtime Coordinator (1,095); Pat Wade, District Rep (845); Nick Stojanovski, REV-C District Rep (829). Retired autoworker Gary Walkowicz, a supporter of *Spark* and *Labor Notes* who has long functioned as a loyal oppositionist in the UAW bureaucracy was elected with 818 votes.

UAW-Ford Vice President Laura Dickerson, who is running as part of Fain’s “Stand Up Slate” after opposing him in 2022-23, also comes from UAW Local 600, underscoring the degree to which this local has functioned as a training ground for top positions in the

UAW International.

In contrast to the bureaucracy’s candidates who hustle votes with threats and bribes, name recognition and glossy election material filled with empty promises, Crutchfield issued three open letters to workers at DTP over the course of the two-week campaign. These addressed the ongoing AI and automation-driven destruction of jobs, forced overtime and speedup in the auto industry and broader political issues, including the expanding US war against Iran and its economic consequences for working families and the attack on democratic rights by the Trump administration. He evoked the powerful traditions of class struggle embedded in the Rouge complex itself, including the 1932 Hunger March, and outlined a strategy rooted in the international unity of the working class.

Supporters distributed the anti-war resolution Will Lehman had introduced at UAW Local 677 in Macungie, Pennsylvania, which calls for the independent mobilization of the working class against the US-Israeli war on Iran. That resolution took direct aim at the nationalism of the UAW bureaucracy, which has lined up behind Trump’s trade war measures and thereby divided American workers from their brothers and sisters in Mexico, Canada and across the world.

In July 2025, Crutchfield spoke at the public hearing held by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) as part of its investigation into the death of autoworker Ronald Adams Sr. The 63-year-old skilled trades veteran was killed on April 7 at the Stellantis Dundee Engine Complex when an overhead gantry crane suddenly activated and crushed him. “Ronnie did not die because of an accident,” he

said. “He died because the system we live under values profit over people... We need to enforce our own safety conditions on the shop floors in every plant.”

The result also marks a measurable advance over Will Lehman’s historic 2022 run. In that election—the first direct membership election in UAW history, marred by systematic voter suppression that saw only 9 percent of eligible members cast ballots—Lehman received 111 votes across the entirety of UAW Local 600, roughly 2.9 percent. Crutchfield’s 122 votes show that the arguments of the rank-and-file movement are gaining traction on the shop floor.

The campaign spoke directly to the majority of DTP workers who did not vote at all—the broad mass alienated from union electoral politics, who rightly see most candidates as careerists seeking a ladder into the apparatus. It offered not promises of better management within the existing bureaucratic structure, but the truth that the apparatus has surrendered everything, and only workers organized independently of it can fight back.

The day of Crutchfield’s vote, 1,300 workers at Nexteer Automotive in Saginaw, Michigan delivered another powerful blow to the UAW bureaucracy. These workers rejected a second UAW-backed sellout contract by 73 percent, with production workers voting it down by 76 percent—a result all the more remarkable given that local officials attempted to intimidate them with threats that the plant might be shut down.

On Sunday, Nexteer workers chased a UAW International representative out of their membership meeting after he cursed at them and threatened them, and they forced the local to schedule a strike vote for this week. The first Nexteer contract had been rejected by 96 percent in March—an extraordinary expression of the depth of working class anger.

These two events—the vote at DTP and the Nexteer rebellion—are expressions of the same underlying reality: a rank and file that is searching for a way to fight. The Stand-Up Strike of 2023, which kept the vast majority of workers on the job while isolating those called out, ended in a sellout that opened the door for mass layoffs, mandatory overtime and death on the shopfloor. Shawn Fain, who wears “Eat the Rich” t-shirts while collecting \$276,000 a year, is now assembling his own convention slate—a “Stand-Up Slate” mixing old guard figures like Laura Dickerson with new faces—to control the June convention and

ensure the apparatus nominates only its own candidates.

The significance of the Rouge complex itself should not be lost. It was here that Henry Ford’s private army massacred workers in the 1932 Hunger March. It was here that socialist organizers and left-wing militants fought to unite black, white and immigrant workers to build the UAW in the face of violent repression. And it was here, in the 1999 fire that killed six powerhouse workers, that UAW officials defended Ford management and called the Rouge “the safest” facility—even as grievances filed by the very workers who died had been buried. The conditions that killed Tywaun Long at DTP in 2024—forced overtime, brutal speedup, and deliberate neglect—are the product of the same collaboration between the UAW apparatus and Ford management.

Another Insurgent Slate candidate at the Stellantis Jefferson North Assembly Plant received 69 votes, demonstrating that the base of support for Lehman’s campaign is not limited to one facility but is emerging at multiple concentrations of the working class in the Detroit area.



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